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BERTHA,

A TRAGEDY.

==

BY EDWARD BALL.

AS PERFORMED, WITH UNANIMOUS APPLAUSE, AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, NORWICH.

==

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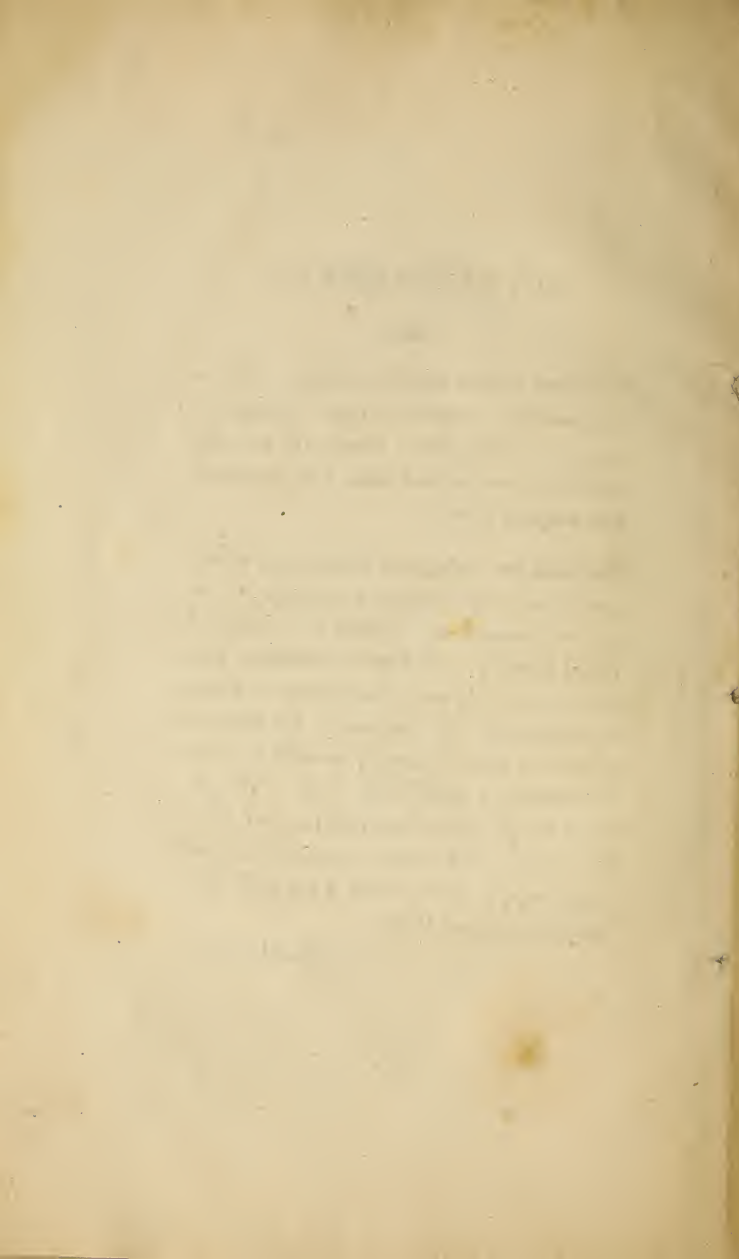
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ADVERTISEMENT.

To those Ladies and Gentlemen, who so successfully exercised their talents in support of this piece, *words* are not sufficiently forcible to evince the gratitude and respect I feel.

Towards an *indulgent* Audience, which has twice, with kindness peculiar to itself, witnessed my efforts to please, I stand equally at a loss to express myself; I can only say, that, however I may be conducted, by Fortune or by Fate, to a more awful tribunal, should I prove successful, I shall ever turn with delight to the warm approbation of OLD FRIENDS, and never consider myself more happy, than when I am still permitted to amuse them.

E. B



TO

B. P. BELLAMY ESQ.

Dear Sir,

Allow me to dedicate to you this TRAGEDY,
not as a compliment in itself, but as a mark of respect-
ful gratitude, for your zealous exertions in its behalf.

I am, Sir,

Your obliged

And obedient Servant,

EDWARD BALL



CHARACTERS.

- Fabian, (*Prince of Istria*) Mr. Vining.
Harold, (*usurping Prince of Istria*) Mr. Short.
Marco, (*a Robber Chief*) Mr. Beachem.
St. Claude, (*a decayed Venetian*) . Mr. Bellamy.
Alfred, (*his Son*) Mr. Diddear.
Conrad, Mr. Hammond.
Martin, Mr. Vale.
- Bertha, (*Daughter of St. Claude*) Miss Norton.
Almeda, Mrs. W. Clifford
Inis, (*with a Song*)

Robbers, Attendants, &c.

THE HISTORY

of the County of Middlesex
from the Conquest to the
Present Time
By JOHN STUBBS, Esq.
F.R.S.
LONDON: Printed by R. CLAY, at the
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BERTHA.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The Cottage of St. Claude, on the banks of the Adriatic; a bridge in the back ground, with a distant view of the Castle of Istria.

Enter St. Claude and Alfred.

Cl. Alfred, this day should wear a smiling aspect,
Since on this day, my child, the lovely Bertha,
Becomes united to the Prince of Istria.

Al. And yet, my father, I have oft observ'd,
The gentle Bertha smiles not on her greatness—
But, all unmindful of this ray of glory,
Shrinks as a reed before the perishing blast;
Lonely she wanders when the battling storm
Wages fierce warfare with our forest boughs;
And, heedless of the angry lightning's gleam,
She little notes its wrath.—Last night, my sire,
While the dun moon rode high o'er yonder tow'rs,
Silently—warily, I watch'd her steps.

Cl. anxiously. My Son!

Al. Forgive me for the deed:
My heart was sadden'd by her mournful sighs—
And frequent had I traced upon her cheek,
The mutely speaking tear.

Cl. But to thy tale.

Al. The while concealed in Night's dim mask, I
stole
Neath the deep awning of a hanging cliff,
As suddenly she paus'd, and, bending low,
Printed warm kisses on the senseless rock.

Cl. Strange deed!

Al. Ee'n then a moonbeam thro' some crevice-
fell,
And by its light, betray'd—

Cl. *fearfully.* What?

Al. Fabian's name!

Cl. There rests at once, the secret of her sorrow—
That Fabian lov'd her I would fain believe—
Yet Fabian left her—haply for another.
Five years are fled, nor, in the length'ning time,
Comes he, or sends he to redeem his vows.

Al. Thinks not my Lord, a stranger, and a peasant,
Should less be honour'd in our Bertha's bosom,
Than the high favour of proud Istria's prince?

Cl. *thoughtfully.* Would that I *knew* Fabian were
dead, or living.

Al. This spirit of romance,
This idle passion of my sister shames me.
Lo where she comes—in silence and in sorrow.

Bertha, buried in thought, crosses the Bridge.

Cl. Leave us together—I would read her heart.

Ex. Alf. Enter Bertha.

My child!

Bertha, starting. That voice! my father!

Throwing herself into his arms.

Cl. Why hast thou left thy couch to rove alone?

Ber. Cheerless, I 'rose with the first beams of morn,
Once more to view, to bless the sacred spot
That Fabian lov'd to trace—but now, 'tis past,
And his fond image banish'd hence for ever.
Five years I mourn'd him—and I mourn'd him dead,
Else all the ills by human art invented,
Had not withheld him from these faithful arms:
Come then, my father, bless your happy child. (*kneels.*)

Cl. Thy joy, methinks, puts on a sorry garb,
Of sable-seeming hue; joy, O my child!
Is the soul's banquet, and be thine, eternal:
Forget thy Fabian Bertha, and be happy.

Bertha, rising. Forget him father? did I say I
could?

The cheating hope deceiv'd me in compassion—
Alas! too deeply in this bruised heart,
The dear remembrance of his worth is graven.

Cl. And such a heart would Bertha give to Harold?
Were such, meet payment for his love—his bounty?

Ber. Tell me of that—O! tell me of his bounty,
When woe and sickness bow'd thy feeble age,
Whose was the ministering hand to raise thee?
Whose, whose, but Harold's!

Cl. And Harold loves thee!

Ber. I too, love the Prince.

Cl. Thy love constrain'd is, else 'twere clad in smiles.

O! comes he not to claim thee as a bride?
 And, heedless of his high renown and rank,
 Stoops to an union with a vassal's daughter!—
 For tho' of noble birth, heaven's wrath was on us,
 Till lib'ral Harold bless'd us with his smile.

Ber. Think'st then, my father, Bertha can forget,
 While the proud banners of our ancient house,
 Low bow'd them to the dust, in adverse hour,
 Whose friendly arms were open to receive us?
 Tho' thy great soul disdain'd his nobler offers,
 And bent contented to the peasant's lot.

Music,—Alfred appears on the bridge.

Al. Hark! o'er yon hills, to sound of pipe and lute,
 The Minstrels gay, from Istria's castle come.—

Cl. Forth, forth, and bid them cheer.
 Daughter retire,—I too must welcome them.

*Exeunt. Bertha into the cottage,
 St. Claude and Alf. across bridge.*

SCENE II.

Almeda's Apartment.

Enter Almeda followed by Inis.

Al. Alas! how wretched is that luckless virgin,
 Design'd like me, to wed a lord unlov'd—
 Like me, the victim of a hopeless passion:
 In early years driven from her peaceful home—

To sound the dulcimer,—to weave the dance—
 To soothe the passions of a heartless master.
 And yet, till yesterday, no cares were mine,
 For Alvar's form had never met these eyes.

In. Why weep'st thou? Princess.

Al. I weep, mine Inis,
 Because the proud Alcazna comes to wed me;
 My father's friend in battle and in triumph;—
 Yet, yet, I love him not. I weep too, Inis,
 When musing on the hapless Christian captive,
 Now doom'd to perish 'neath the Sultan's ire.

In. Alas! thou weep'st then, at the Sultan's will!

Al. O Inis! once, like thee unconscious, I
 Too little dreamt that liberty had charms:
 But, Fate has wrought a wond'rous change within me.
 Dids't thou not note the captive in his chains?
 How sad, how pale he look'd!

In. My heart bled for him——

The dreadful wrath of Mahomet was on us;
 And check'd our wand'rings to the secret lattice.

Al. Ah me! I thought not of the captive Alvar—
 'Twas to enjoy the evening's cool, I ventur'd.
 O fatal chance! that led me to the spot.
 I would——

In. What would Almeda?

Al. That she were free;
 But to become, even Alcazna's slave—
 Could she with the price of freedom, purchase
 The ransom of Alvar.

In. Alla forbid
 Such impious deed in Turkish land were done.

Was not the guilty Alvar born a Christian ?

Al. I little heed his country or his faith.
Think'st then, weak Inis ! at the hour of trial,
Our holy Prophet will reproach compassion ?
I have heard, O Inis !
Of some, who met more pity in Christian climes,
Than e'er the offspring of the Faithful knew.

In. Unhappy daring ! fears't thou not perdition ?

Al. Believe me, no ; the Deity I serve,
Reads well each inmost working of the soul—
'Tis his decree,
Each thought, each passion that I know and cherish ;
Else were these throbs not here. (*Touching her*
Music. *bosom.*)

In. Lo where the Sultan, mighty Zeyen, comes.

Al. O that these eyes were hidden in the tomb,
To hide the tearful anguish they express—
Say to him Inis, I'll attend his will.

Exit Inis.

Fled is the love, the gratitude I knew—
Which taught this heart to bless my father's presence,
But ah ! a softer passion lingers here,
Replete with hope, for wishes, seeming hopeless.

Re-enter Inis.

In. The Sultan, Princess, waits to say farewell.

Almeda, with eagerness. Whither goes my Father ?]

In. Merely to hold a solemn audience—
The blush of morn restores him to our Harem.

Al. I'll to him straight—good Inis, wait at hand.

Exit Inis.

A blessed thought is with me—
 To night, when silent darkness robes these walls,
 The Sultan's ring shall answer for my presence,
 And prove a passport to the dungeon's gloom.
 What may not gold effect upon the guard—
 Come sullen night, and in thy sable vest,
 Conceal the deed that pangs, yet cheers my breast.

Exit.

SCENE III.

A Gothic Corridor in the Castle of Istria.

Harold discovered.

Har. Has life a charm, when such perplexing
 thoughts

Burst into terror and distrust upon us—
 Casting a venom in the gilded cup
 That holds enjoyment to our fev'rish lip.
 Each passing sound—each object that approaches,
 Seems as some harbinger of deadly ill.
 O! that this heart could rest, at once assur'd
 Of no compunction in the assassin's nature ;
 Then might I soar, beyond the stars, with transport.
 But ah! for guilt, there is a coming morrow,
 Which drives the soul to madness—to despair.

Enter Marco.

Mar. My lord, I tend your leisure.

Harold, starting at his sudden approach and sub-
duing his emotions. Marco!——approach.

Are we alone?

Marco, looking round. We are, my lord.

Harold coming close to Marco.

Marco, last night a fearful dream came o'er me.

Mar. A dream!

Harold drawing nearer.

Methought, my brother Fabian was return'd.

Marco, scornfully. Pshaw!

Har. Nay, as I live, his well-known form appear'd ;
No hue of death, no funeral sheet hung o'er him ;
But, as in life, his penetrating eye,
Indignant bent its scorching lustre on me.
Now, hast thou err'd, or dealt unjustly, Marco——

Marco, interrupting him. These narrow doubts
disgrace the soul of Harold.

Have I not told thee, till the tale is tedious,
How Fabian fell—these eyes beheld him low—
These hands were crimson'd with thy brother's
blood.

Harold, with savage eagerness. O blessed hands !
being his life-blood, Marco.

Mar. I'll warrant such it was——

I knew the spot were Fabian lov'd to rove,
And cross'd him on his path. So desperate,
So firm this arm was, as it struck the blow,
That had he been of else than human nature,
He ne'er had spoken more.

Har. O brave Marco !

Mar. So dead, so helpless, o'er my shield I toss'd
him,
Till, from the verge of Istria's dizzy cliffs,
Which frowning, bend athwart the foamy waters,

All silently I gave him to to the deep :
 Nor dying groan, nor voice of death was there ;
 Yet once, as't pass'd, ha ! ha ! the sullen breeze
 Seem'd like the threat'nings of his angry ghost.

Harold, alarmed. Might it not be Fabian ?

Marco, haughtily. I have said no.

Harold, subdued. Forgive me Marco, I would be
 so firm,

So steadily exalted in mine honour,
 That speck, nor blur, should rise to dim its lustre.
 This day, I take the spotless hand of Bertha ;
 Fall'n as I am, my bosom glows with love.
 Get from my sight—assume a better grace—
 Change these rude weeds for light and costly robes—
 Smile i'the world, else will the world suspect thee—
 I'd have men think thee aught, but what thou
 art.

Mar. I was not form'd to smile, as others smile ;
 E'en from my childhood, I was deem'd most sullen—
 Yet, if t'will please thee, I'll attire me brightly ;
 (*Aside.*) Till thy proud heart ache at my gaudiness.

Exit.

Har. Monster ! Monster !—why, what a wretch
 am I !—

The very tool and vassal of a savage—
 Nay, nay, of worse,—one that for gain would sell me,
 And laughing, trample on my murder'd corse.
 Yet such a fiend, there's madness in the thought,
 Is but the counterpart of what I am.
 O ! for a draught from dull oblivion's cup,
 To quench the stern remembrance of my crimes—

Delicious thought! in gentle Bertha's arms,
 I'll lose my anguish—press her to my breast,
 And let this thirsty heart drink deep of joy.

Exit.

SCENE IV.

A Dungeon, with a rude staircase through the back scene.—Fabian in chains, reclining on the rock.

Fab. 'Tis sad to mark the faint, expiring lamp,
 Casting its niggard influence thro' the gloom,
 But sadder 'tis, o'er hopeless love to pine;
 And dream, as 'twere, of bliss, flown, flown for ever.
 O Bertha! object of my fondest wishes,
 Thou little knows't, haply as little heeds't,
 How suff'ring Fabian, exil'd, banish'd, chain'd,
 Sighs forth his soul, without one friendly voice
 To soothe his woes—to calm his agony.——

Almeda, veiled, and bearing a lamp, appears in the back scene.

What lovely vision bursts upon my sight!

Al. Stranger, be comforted—hark! (*pause.*)

Fab. O heaven!

This form is mortal—wherefore comes it thus?

Al. Captive, if one, inclined to serve, to save,
 In rash defiance of her Sov'reign's law,
 Like me thus secretly appear'd before thee,
 And ventur'd even life to rescue thine,
 How would'st thou pay the debt of gratitude.

Fab. By every art that Nature has devised—
 By friendship true, true and unchangeable.

Al. Attend, attend, I may not tarry long.
From royal Zeyen, who this morn condemn'd thee,
I learnt they call thee Alvar, but thy tale—— ——

Fab. Is brief.

A Christian, born of parents high and noble,
I knew no ill, till heav'n decreed my sire
A calm repose beside his ancestors—
E'en then, the tear was short-liv'd on my cheek,
The vassals of our house hail'd me their chief;
And wealth, abundant wealth, was left to bless me.
But one sad eve, when twilight rob'd the earth,
As from the bow'r, wherein I lov'd to linger,
In silent gloom I sought my 'custom'd way,
Some dire assassin stabb'd me i'the breast,
Then dragg'd me, senseless, to a towering cliff,
And sternly hurl'd me to the swelling ocean.

Al. Whose was the hand extended to preserve thee?

Fab. Alas! I know not, sense had fled my brain;
And many a month, all, all seem'd desolate.
Still, by degrees, reason resum'd its powers—
Then came a thousand pangs unfelt before:
These limbs, late clad in splendour and in pride,
Bent 'neath the fetters of a galley slave—
All I could learn, from such as felt my pain,
Was, that expiring on the crimson'd waters,
A Corsair's valour snatch'd me from destruction—
Whose vessel, taken by a Turkish Chieftain,
Gave him and me to bondage and despair.

Al. Pursue, unhappy one, thy tale of woe.

Fab. 'Twere vain in me to note the sighs, the tear
That wretchedness hath wrung from this sad heart.

Tho' Zeyen's hand had soften'd my stern lot,
 Yet Lady, yet, the wish of freedom liv'd—
 And yesternight, when all seem'd hush'd to slumber,
 Full silently I sought the lonely beach,
 Where, ready oar'd, the Sultan's galley lay,
 With wild intent to trust me to the deep—
 When Fiends, fell Fiends frustrated the design,
 By dragging me to punishment and chains.

Al. Alvar, I know a youth of boundless valour,
 Of worthy parents, but who, dying, left him
 In the hard durance of a rigid lord;
 Fain would he seek the land his kindred lov'd,
 His aged mother urg'd him to the deed.—
 To morrow night, when the dim moon is up,
 This youth shall guide thee to a hired bark—
 And heaven direct ye thro' the waves of peril.

Fab. Accept, fair form! a captive's gratitude.

Throwing himself at her feet.

Al. Thus on your knees, make me a solemn vow
 To love this youth, to share his toil and danger;
 Swear too by her, who thus to save thee comes,
 E'en at the hazard of her peace, her life,
 Ne'er to desert,—to cast him from thy favour.

Fab. All this I swear, and by the Saints I honour.

Al. His name is, Hafna——
 Stranger I go, the morning light appears.

Fab. Tell me *thy* name,
 That I may ever mix it in my pray'rs:
 For sure that veil some holy form conceals.

Al. Alas! *my* name might be too soon forgotten.

Yea, 'twere as well, since we no more can meet.
Be kind to Hafna. (*going*)

Fab. Yet, a moment stay.

Lady, that poignard in thy girdle placed,
Present to Hafna as my captive pledge;
Tell him, for thy sake, I have sworn to love him—
E'en on its point have sworn.

Almeda, presenting the dagger. Wilt thou so swear?

Fabian, kissing the dagger. If time or place, should
make me break this vow,

Teach him to bring thy dagger to my sight—
And if I bow not, conscience rent, before him,
Then let him plant it in my faithless heart.

Al. It shall be so; farewell.

Fab. Farewell!——Farewell.

*As she ascends through the back scene, he
silently continues to express his gratitude.*

Music.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

*A Splendid Apartment—Bertha, richly attired,
discovered on a couch, reading.*

Ber. Oft have I heard, the magic of a tale
Could chase too sad remembrance from the breast,
But this lone heart will turn to happier scenes
And bid them bloom in all their fav'rite hues.
Gay was the time that glided o'er my marriage;
Yet ah! too soon, grief comes again to me,

And keen misfortune, like an envious blast,
Severs the budding lily of my years.

Enter St. Claude.

Cl. Bertha!

Bertha, throwing herself into his arms. My father!
my dear, dear father!

Cl. What means this wildness Bertha? Bertha
speak?

Thy cheek is paler than when last we parted.
O! hast thou cause of more than common sorrow,
Be brief and shew it.

Ber. Forbear, my father,
I did but grieve me at thy tedious absence;
Where hast thou staid so long?

Cl. Forsooth, my child,
I little dreamt an aged parent's converse
Could be so welcome as a bridegroom's tale.

Ber. But had'st thou known the loneliness I suffer'd
And hadst thou known how Bertha sigh'd to see thee.

Cl. Unhappy bride! is Fabian still with thee?

Ber. Believe me no; that form is lost to Bertha,
Or, as the inmate of a nameless grave,
It claims a tributary tear of pity.
Thou, O my sire! did'st know me ever grateful,
And had not Harold all thy daughter's love,
How cold a heart had she.

Cl. Why then, Bertha,
Thus bathed in tears, thus blighted do I see thee?

Ber. I but lament my days of pleasure flown,
For now I seem as one cast off by kin;

Or exiled lonely to some blooming garden,
 Where all things, but the charm I most admire,
 The genuine intercourse of kindred souls,
 Appear to bless me ; yet, that one thing absent,
 Saddens the rest, and makes them seem as nought.

Cl. The princely Harold is of gentle nature—
 How many, Bertha, would with transport hail
 Thy happy influence o'er his heart and mind.

Ber. O! that my lord were but the man he
 seemed,

Then were I bless'd and Fabian's vows forgotten ;
 But ah! that air, that outward form of love,
 From me, who fondly hoped to see it ever ;
 Too quick was banishd—coldness follow'd soon—
 And dull abstraction stole his pleasing converse ;
 Yet, ever and anon, his milder nature
 Returning, seems to wound his inmost soul ;—
 O! then so mild, so gentle are his accents,
 That Bertha's heart subdued, is fain to love him :
 But, even as the soft emotion kindles,
 Wildly he notes me,—then, absorb'd in thought,
 Seems as one musing on the very dead.

Cl. Such are the wayward failings of mankind ;
 Or, should some sorrow prey on Harold's peace—

Ber. Why not confide in me ?

Cl. Because—perchance,
 There may be reasons of a weighty nature—
 Matters of import—secrets of the state.

Ber. Yet, there is *one*, who shares his inmost soul ;
 One, whose dark eye glares terror in these halls—
 Yes, I have seen e'en Harold's cheek turn pale,

When wine, or anger redden'd Marco's visage !
 Yet, Marco is the vassal of his bounty !

Cl. These things seem strange ; and still, may rise
 from fancy.

Perhaps, some strange infirmity of Marco,
 Known but to Harold, claims his warm compassion.

Ber. It *may*, indeed, be so :

But I oft note in Harold's burning brow,
 When Marco's rob'd in silk, and broider'd raiment,
 Marks of contempt, the which he strives to hide.
 And yet, my sire, these things *may* be but fancy.
 For frequent, when the waning moon is high,
 Harold will trace the wand'ring steps of Marco,
 As tho' he fear'd some dark design were with him.
 'Twas but last night, I miss'd him from repose ;
 Still was the breeze, a half-form'd voice came o'er me,
 When, softly gliding to yon ivied lattice,
 Mine eyes beheld my husband and this Marco,
 Wrapt in close converse—once, once, methought——

*She draws nearer and gazes fear-
 fully around.*

Claude, alarmed. What thought'st thou ?

Ber. Methought—I—I could not err,—
 'Twas Harold's voice—it told of secret murder. [sion

Cl. Perish these thoughts ; this old and dreary man—
 Makes thee fantastic in thy gloominess.

Come, let us in—hear you the banquet bell ?

We'll talk of this hereafter.

Excunt.

SCENE II.

*A Turkish Chamber—Almeda and Inis enter
from folding doors in the back scene.*

Al. My soul is sad—I cannot rest to night.
Is the Sultan sleeping?

In. He is! Princess.

Al. Is he alone?

In. Save the attending guard,
And such as wait to fan him while he sleeps,
He is alone.

Al. Then Inis, to thy couch.

(Ex. Inis.)

O! for this act, how dreadful is the thought—
Midnight is near—the Sultan sleeps serenely ;
This ring once more, shall aid my steps to Alvar ;—
Yet, let me pause, what daring act is this ?
Thus, thus, to forfeit all, for one, a stranger—
A wretch perchance—an undeserving outlaw—
Ah no ! my heart denies the base aspersion:
Why wert thou deaf, my father, to his pray'rs ?
Distracting thought, thy captive, in these towers—
To morrow's sun would beam upon his corse.
Fate, love, and pity struggle in my breast,
And come what may, I fly to set him free. *(Exit.)*

Re-enter Inis, with a dulcimer.

In. The wildness of Almeda's look alarms me.
I cannot slumber while she sighs alone.

Gone to repose ; nay, then I'll wake my chords,
And charm her with the song she loves to hear.

BALLAD.

Dark, dark was the night, and the keen-howling storm
Blew fearfully stern o'er hill, desert, and strand ;
As an Arab rode hard, his fond breast beating warm,
To the maid he ador'd in his own native land.

Loud, loud sigh'd the wind, and dull midnight was near,
As faster he urg'd his swift steed o'er the strand ;
" O Mahomet ! guide me," he cried, with a tear,
" To the maid I adore in mine own native land.

Soon, soon he arriv'd where the grey turret frown'd,
And beautiful Zhilna stood waving her hand—
When a flash of the storm struck him dead on the ground,
By the maid he ador'd in his own native land.

(Inis retires thro' the folding doors.

Re-enter Almada still veiled, conducting Fabian disguised.

Al. Alvar, a word and death attends the sound,
This ring your passport thro' the nightly guards—
This Eunuch's garb secures thee from their gaze.
Beneath our ramparts waits a hired galley,
T'will bear thee to a vessel out at sea—
Hafna will join thee ere the grey-eyed morn—
I dare no more—away—

He attempts to express his gratitude—she fearfully motions him to withdraw in silence—he withdraws—she pursues him with her eyes.

Al. They know the ring—he passes unsuspected—
Thank heaven !————

The friendly lattice of my lonely chamber
 Hangs lowly o'er the undulating ocean,
 'Neath which Zulima, ever faithful slave !
 Promis'd to wait—O ! should she mock my faith,
 Alas ! my heart would break—did I not hear
 The dashings of her oar ? I'll to my pillow,
 And seem to sleep—peace, peace my trembling breast :
 O ! aid my flight, ye powr's that reign above,
 And prosper Hafna with Almeda's love.

Exit.

SCENE III.

An Entrance to the Castle.—Moonlight.

Enter Harold.

Har. Guilt, like a canker in the fading rose,
 Eats, imperceptibly the wasting heart ;
 But when, at first, the cheating phantom woës us,
 How sweetly soft appear her magic accents !
 Till, thro' conviction's terrifying glass,
 The cheated victim casts a backward glance,
 And—O ! the pangs, the horrors of that scene,
 Are woven deeply in my guilty conscience.—
 Why are men sinners who would fain be good ?
 Hangs there a fate inevitable o'er us,
 To make of this a fiend, of that a saint ?——
 If so, I am but hapless in my lot,
 And not the fallen thing my soul abhors.

Enter Marco.

Mar. The banquet waits—why tarriest here alone ?

Har. I pray excuse me—I'll attend anon—
 The hoary Claude must needs forgive me Marco ;
 He knows the balm of secret meditation.

Marco, enviously. Thy language this ?

Har. Why such sternness ? Marco,
E'en now St. Claude observ'd thy savage glare—
Frequent, his eye was bent on thee and me ;
And then, retiring to his inmost self,
Absorb'd he seem'd, in deep and painful thought.

Marco, haughtily. His thoughts I reckon not, nor his
love request.

Har. What is't thou lov'st ?

Mar. Believe me, one most fair.

Har. A woman ?

Mar. Aye, by my hopes, a woman !
Yet men, of smooth-fac'd, comely honesty,
Will term me knave—since, she's another's bride.

Har. Then, let that lord be watchful o'er his mate,
When *such* a lover condescends to woo :
Tell me her name.

Marco, (aside) I'll scorch his soul. (*aloud*) the
lovely Bertha.

Harold, partly unsheathing his sword. Villain !
miscreant !

Mar. Ha ! ha ! ha !

Har. Heavenly pow'r !
Was it for this I fled thy blessed path !
Was it for this ? to let the ruthless vulture
Prey on the very vitals of my bosom—
(*To Marco*) I'st not enough thy form must blast
me ever,
Rising, as 'twere, twixt me and my redemption,

But thou must mock thy chieftain in his halls
 And blight each hope, while the poor 'tangled wretch,
 Writhing within thy many-folded net,
 Groans in his bitterness of hate and anguish.

Mar. You frown'd not thus, when first, amid
 Triest's hills,
 Your wealth seduc'd me to a murd'rous deed—
 Ere this firm arm had slain thine elder brother,
 And placed thee on thy pinnacle of greatness.

Har. O! would that deed could be again undone,
 That I might rest in peace.

Marco, jeeringly Too kind reward!
 Why so indignant at the love I boast?

Harold, drawing his sword. Another word,
 and from thy prostrate corse,
 The blood of life shall dye its native earth.

Mar. Thou might'st have learnt this hand was
 skill'd as thine—
 Thou might'st have known, this sword could pierce
 as keenly. (*drawing his sword*)
 See! where 'tis crusted with thy brother's blood.

Harold, rushing upon him. Monster! Assassin!

*Marco sinks beneath the fury of Harold
 who is about to stab him, as St. Claude, fol-
 lowed by Bertha, suddenly enters and pre-
 vents the blow.*

Cl. What fearful sight is this.

Harold endeavouring to recover himself, I scarcely
 know.

'Twas in an angry mood—Marco—

St. Claude, gazing on Marcó. Still, those features—
(*musings.*)

Har. My lord?

Cl. Can this be Marco?—tell me his offence.

Har. Not now, some other time—come let us
in—

Marco, we're friends; (*aside*) it must, it must be
thus.

Attend us to the hall.

Marco sullenly. I shall attend. (*he retires*)

St. Claude, coming forward. I am much troubled.

Ber. How my father.

Cl. Wild thoughts remind me of a strange event.

Har. I pray you tell it us.

Cl. 'Twas, while I bode in Triest's romantic
cottage.

One summer's eve, as lone I wander'd thro' the rocky
dell,

A human figure glided o'er my path,

On whose broad shield a lifeless body hung.

The assassin's hands were reeking i'the blood

And savagely they grasp'd the dead man's hair.

Ber. O horrid sight! did'st thou behold the features?

Cl. Not of the corse, but his that bore it, plainly.

Har. Knew'st thou the man?

Cl. Shall I forget his pale and haggard looks,

But partially reveal'd amidst the gloom?

His ragged elf-locks floating on the wind—

His giant stride too, and his guilty starts—

Shall I forget them?—never.——

Har. Could'st thou accuse?

Cl. Haply I could, should time and chance agree.

Marco, behind. Which never shall agree. (*Exit.*

Harold, aside. Might this be Fabian's corse? if
it were so,

He knew it not——thank heaven!

Cl. The murd'rer saw me not—as little dreamt
That other eyes beheld the bloody sight.
Near to that spot I rear'd a rustic tomb,
And Bertha, thou hast noted oft my prayrs
For the departed.

Ber. I own it true,
And yet I knew not why those prayrs were said,
But deem'd that grassy mound thy rural altar;
Else had idea form'd a moaning ghost—
Nor I have dar'd to trace the gloom I lov'd;
Or, to the well known cliff have lonely stol'n,
To grave the name of——

Harold, hastily. Whom?

Bertha, throwing herself into St. Claude's arms.
Father!

Cl. O! never father had so fond a child.
Where's Marco?

Har. Is he not here?

Cl. 'Tis growing late—
He hath retir'd in secret, to repose;
Good night!

Ber. I'll bear thy taper thro' the gallery.

Exeunt.

Har. St. Claude confounds me by his words and actions.

Can Marco be suspected—can it be—
 O! that the wretch, ere he had met these eyes,
 In the earth's depth had slept, yea, slept for ever.
 But as it is, I needs must venture on,
 Like timid childhood o'er forbidden ice.
 The bold profession of this ruffian's love—
 St. Claude's suspicions, if my fears be just,
 And Bertha's doubts, all must effect my shame.
 One hope alone remains—in Marco's death
 How many nameless things might be effected :—
 Would I were rid of him, and how to be so
 Remains the dearest puurpose of my soul ;—
 Which once attain'd, shall to my coming days
 A golden harvest yield.

Exit.

SCENE IV.

A Bedchamber.—Enter Marco from behind the arras.

Mar. All sad, all quiet as the house of death—
 This is the bed whereon St. Claude reposes—
 On which, to night, he shall repose for ever.
 He little deems the tale of his extinction,
 Was that, but now, in which he noted me :
 No matter—all fears—all threats, I bear a charm
 Shall lay (*producing a dagger*) hist—he comes.
Retiring behind the bed curtains.

Enter St. Claude—Bertha bearing the light.

Cl. We'll speak of this to morrow, dearest Bertha ;

To-morrow thou shalt learn my fears of Marco :
Meantime, good night !

Ber. My bosom mocks repose
And cold and comfortless it throbs the while,
As desolation sat upon my soul
To cry out, all is lost——

Cl. O my child !
These sorry phantoms but disgrace thy mind.
The eye of heav'n is ever on us Bertha—
Prythee 'o rest.

Ber. At once, at once, good night.
O! be thy slumbers such as angels sleep,
When heavenly music lulls them to repose.

St. Claude, embracing her. My child, good night !
Exit Bertha.

Sure Bertha's sorrow must have tarried here,
For, as the gale sweeps mournfully along,
It seems to waft some perjurd spirit's moan.

Re-enter Bertha.

Ber. Alas ! nine tedious hours must pass away,
Ere we can meet again—yet, with the dawn,
Fain would I come a watcher to thy couch.
Could we not talk of olden times, my father,
Dear to remembrance, when the frolic hours
Seem'd as gay moments to our tranquil hearts.

Cl. Bertha, why thus desert thy lord ?
Who listless, on his solitary couch,
Beshrews perchance thy parent's tenderness,
Which holds thee from his arms.

Leading her to the door.

Ber. I go—farewell.

(*Exit.*)

Cl. Something to night hangs sadly o'er my soul,
And all the visions of my life seem lost
In one dark vapour of futurity.

Marco comes forward.

Why steals't thou thus upon my solitude?
At once withdraw, or I shall rouse the guard.

Marco, shewing his dagger. This ready friend will
silence all thy clamours;
Marco would fain be great—an old man's tongue
Must never tell, and tell to his undoing,
A tale of other times.

Cl. Horrible assassin!
Hath not thy soul drunk deep enough of guilt?
Why gazest thou thus terribly upon me?

Mar. To mark the victim which my safety needs.

Cl. Thou wilt not murder me—thou durst not
Marco.

Ho! help! help!

*Rushing towards the door, Marco pursues,
and stabs him.*

Mar. So perish all that would be Marco's foes.

Cl. My children! O my children! (*falls.*)

Mar. To night the sword of Harold rose upon me—
Let him beware how fatal prove such deeds,
Or this same dagger revels in *his* blood.

Bertha, without. My father's voice! unbar, unbar
the door.

Mar. They strive for entrance ; I must haste away—
Nor openly confess this act mine own.

Exit.—*Noise of domestics forcing
the door—alarm bell rings,*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

*The Ocean, discovered through rocks—Fabian and
Almeda enter—she disguised as a boy.*

Al. Hafna revive, since heaven is merciful,
Or vainly had we battled with the waters.
Look up, look up, and welcome the bless'd pow'r
Which cast our galley on my native shore.

Al. Is this the land you ever prized so dearly ?
If so, I welcome it with grateful rapture.
Ah me ! how anxiously, how deeply so,
Have I o'erhung the towering vessel's side,
And stain'd my sight to hail yon beetling cliffs,
Because I knew these shores would yield thee transport.

Fab. Kind boy, each day, each moment that I
 know thee,
So tenderly thou twinest round my heart,
That but for *one*, whose image hovers o'er me,
And fain would circle all this beating breast,
Needs must it all be thine.

Alm. O Fabian !

Thou wert the beam that led me on to heaven ;
And yet, for one, a beggar in esteem,
Thus cruelly, thus calmly, thou desert'st me.

Fab. Desert thee, Hafna !

Thou wrongst me much—by heav'n ! thou wrong'st
me Hafna :

No, by the soul of her who gave thee to me,
Blessed Almeda ; sooner I'd forfeit all,
All that is dear to nature's tend'rest ties,
Than cease to love the gift her hand conferr'd.

Al. Men are unjust ; for, O ! I know a tale—
My poor lost mother lov'd to tell it me :
'Tis of a young and beauteous Turkish maid,
Who fondly lov'd her father's meanest vassal—
Yea, frequently she sought his lonely pallet,
To cheer his heart with smiles and tender kisses ;—
Lastly, she freed him from his chains of bondage,
And fled, companion of his fears and peril.
At first, of love, of gratitude he spoke—
But ah ! too soon the dear delusion vanish'd,
Love's ardour chang'd, and then, that slighted mourner,
Lonely, deserted, sought her aged father,—
To hear his bitter curse—to weep, to die.

Fab. Banish these ill-tim'd griefs.

See, yonder traveller descends the cliffs—
He winds this way—perchance, his friendly voice
May guide us to some hospitable cabin.

Enter Marco, disguised.

Good morrow ! stranger—we are wayworn wand'rers,

That have but lately scaped the angry billows,
We pray you shew us to some house of comfort.

Mar. That voice! those features! this is marvellous!
Not dead—I must be wrong—by hell! 'tis Fabian.

Fab. Thou know'st me! stranger.

Mar. If thou art one, by all the world thought dead,
And not some devil conjur'd up to cheat me,
Why, then I know thee—thou art Istria's prince.

Fab. The same—
Escap'd from bondage, cruelty, and death.
Tell me, stranger, what of my kin exist.

Mar. Thy younger brother reigns, as Chief of Istria.

Fab. Know'st thou how distant far his mansion
stands?

Mar. 'Tis scarce a league; I'll guide ye thro' the
rocks—

If ye will trust yourselves to my direction.

Fab. With many thanks. Come Hafna, on with
us;

The thoughts of home, friends, kindred, fill my soul,
And thou art in the centre of my joy:—
Nor shall a ray of happiness be mine
That Hafna shares not. *Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

An Antichamber.—Enter Harold and Bertha.

Ber. Lead me again to the black vault of death,
That I may throw me prostrate on his bier—
That I may kiss again his pale, pale cheek,

And dew his clay-cold form with filial tears.
 O my father! my sainted, murder'd father!
 Look from thy mansion of eternal glory,
 And, with the winged light'nings of heaven's anger,
 Strike the assassin lifeless at my feet.

Har. Dear Bertha! be comforted.

Ber. Mock me not—

But rather, lead me to some horrid shade,
 Where light nor cheering sunbeam ever came—
 There, in sad gloom, to weep my life away.
 Unhappy that I am, that had a sire—
 And such a one! yet watch'd not by his couch,
 E'en at the very moment, when my soul,
 In dark forebodings, whisper'd something dreadful;
 So had my cries preserv'd my father's life—
 Or, blessed thought! we had expir'd together.

Har. Why this unkindness to a breast like mine?
 Canst thou at once forget the love I bear—
 And wish to die, regardless of my anguish.

Ber. Thou know'st not Bertha's woe.
 O! in excess of agonizing sorrow,
 Self is the heart's carousal; and the feast
 On which it banquets, sighs and tears.
 Care, like some mourner at her lowly cross,
 Thinks little upon friends, or foes, or kin;
 But, to one object, and that object lost,
 It seems, as 'twere devoted—so, alas!
 'The form of him these eyes no more can see,
 Is ever present in the mind's fond mirror—
 As cold, and pale, extended on the earth,

I found him in his chamber——
He was not dead, Harold—he was not dead.

Har. Not dead ! Bertha.

Ber. Believe me, no.

Ere yet repose had weigh'd mine eyelids down,
Strange terrors hurried thro' my troubled soul,
And thou wert absent, wand'ring from the castle,
In nightly gloom, as is thy frequent custom ;—
With fearful haste I caught my trembling taper,
And, hurried onward by impetuous fancy,
Scarce knowing why, sped to my father's chamber ;
But, as I pass'd the cloister'd gallery,
Hung ages back, with warrior's batter'd armour,
Methought, just silver'd i'the moon's pale beam,
Each sullen casque bent frowningly upon me—
I paus'd alarm'd, when, thro' the calm of night,
A hollow death-groan hit upon mine ear—
Ah me ! that tone,—that voice too well I knew,
And with my cries, awoke the sleeping vassals :
But all, alas ! too late.

Bursting into an agony of grief.

Har. O ! weep not thus.

Would that my life could make thee happy Bertha—
Or, that I might exchange it for thy father's ;
Since woe is mine when others know but joy :
For care and I are sworn, unhappy partners,
And this rash hand hath sign'd the fatal contract.
Thy father liv'd thou said'st ?

Ber. My lord, I did.

Madness was with me, as within these arms,
I caught his form, I met his dying eye—

“Whose deed is this ?” some trembling voice ex-
claimed,

“Marco’s !” he falter’d, and the life was gone :
Death had subdued it—but, high heaven is just !
Nor shall the humblest insect fall unseen.

Har. No more of this, thou wildly frantic mourner ;
’Tis ill in thee, at such a painful hour,
To name the dying accents of thy sire.
Could Marco’s hand have done a deed so vile,
As slay the man that never injur’d him ?—
No more of this—

Enter a Page.

Boy My lord, before the gates,
Count Alfred, and his melancholy train,
Await their bidding—

Har. Let down the bridge.
Give all attention to a guest so welcome ;
Wave high in air the castle’s sable banner,
And bid our Almoner strew gold around.

Exit Page.

Now, dearest Bertha, hasten to thy chamber,
For tho’ I would not see thee else than sad,
Yet would I have thee noble in thy grief—
As best becomes the bride of Istria’s Prince.

Ber. O ! that the bleeding fountain of my heart
At once were dry ; or I had ceas’d to feel.
Ah ! my brother ! when day by day we met,
Custom had made our meetings second nature ;
But now, a thousand agonizing thoughts
Arise, to bid thee welcome. *Exit.*

Harold, after a pause. Ghost of St. Claude!
 By this, thou knows't my dread, my hope, my
 guilt,
 And thou canst tell, I knew not of thy murder.
 That Marco's guilty hand struck thy death blow,
 My doubt—his absence from the castle speaks.
 Yet wherefore did it so?—'twere hard to guess:
 Was it to seal up our eternal secret—
 And coffin with St. Claude our latent dread—:
 But yet, he knew not Fabian's murder'd form!
 O! Marco is a wretch! so base, so stern,
 That if an atom of suspicion warm'd him,
 Too well I read his rancour for St. Claude.

Exit.

SCENE III.

*Interior of a rude Cavern.—Martin, Conrad, and
 Robbers, drinking.*

ROBBER-GLEE.

'Tis gay, at merry morn to ride,
 With spirits light, and manners bold—
 'Tis blithe, in forests green to 'bide,
 And cry to travellers, hold! hold! hold!
 When hides the Sun his golden vest,
 Nought fearing tempest, tide, nor cold—
 When Labour's sons retire to rest,
 We rise and cry out hold! hold! hold!
 When howling curs the moon assail,
 And locks her doors the Beldame old—
 We glide o'er mountain, mead, and dale,
 As Echo answers hold! hold! hold!

Enter Marco, Fabian, and Almeda, she bearing a small packet.

Mar. Good morrow friends—(To *Fab.*) these rugged swains, my lord,
Well known to me, will shelter us to night—
Indeed we cannot on—Hark ye, *Martin*,
These travellers must be provided for,
They journey to the castle ; I, their guide,
Have wander'd from my path—the moon shines not—
And but for chance, which led us to thy cell,
The desert rock had been our couch to night.

Mart. If the poor viands of our humble dwelling,
And the rude fellowship of humbler souls,
For once, be not offensive to ye, strangers,
We cry, ye're welcome.

Fab. Thanks, kind old man ;
To night we'll share thy hospitable meal—
To morrow, at his long deserted home,
The Istrian prince, shall pay the debt I owe.

Mart. Be seated with us.

Fabian and Almeda, seating themselves at table, become interested in Martin's conversation who appears describing the cabin. Marco and Conrad, as preparing wine, retire on one side.

Mar. They must not hence.
To night, brave *Conrade*, stab them while they sleep.
'Tis *Fabian*—

Con. How ?

Mar. Enough, he lives ; the rest thou'lt know hereafter.

Con. What is't the boy conveys so carefully?

Mar. Some foreign garb;

I sav'd it for him, from the angry waters.

Martin to Fabian. Our couch is hard, and homely
in its fashion—

Yet such as 'tis—'tis your's—

Almeda, rising. Let us retire I pray you, Fabian,
come.

Fab. Not to deprive the peasants of their rest.

Mar. You'll not disturb them—'tis their solemn
feast—

They watch to night in honour of a saint.

Fab. Hafna, awhile retire and slumber then.

Al. But not alone, for thou must guard my
sleep;

Wild dreams are with me—visions terrible!

And, i'the agony thereof, I lack

Some ready hand to break the mystic horror.

Fab. Now, dearest youth, 'twill please me well to
note thee.

Mar. I'll bear the lamp—this way.

Fabian and Almeda. Good night to all.

Exeunt.

*The Robbers rise and come forward in
consultation—re-enter Marco.*

Mar. On second thoughts, twere not so well to
slay them—

As suits our purpose they can live, or die—

Should haughty Harold frown on my demands

For gold—methinks, there yet remains a way
To make us men.

Robbers How? Marco, how?

Mar. By selling liberty to Fabian.

(*Exit abruptly*)

Robbers. Success, success to Marco.

*They return to the table—re-enter
Marco——distant music——Robbers
start.*

Con. How now? Marco.

Mar. Some monkish wanderers
Perform a pilgrimage of penitence—
And many a richly jewell'd rosary
Shall pay thy labour—they are aged men.

Robbers. Away! away!

(*They rush out.*)

*Marco approaches Fabian's chamber,
listens, secures the door, and exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

*A gothic Apartment.—Night.—Harold, Bertha,
and Alfred,—a banquet table on one side, with wine
and goblets.*

Al. Revive, my lord; this wild anxiety
Will prey upon thy spirits—
Retire to rest; the midnight glass is spent,
They will not back till morn.

Har. But even now, upon our topmost tow'r,
While the dank night-breeze wav'd the forest boughs,
I saw their torches glare. (*thunder*)

Al. The night is rough—
Loud shrieks the blast, and keenly blows the storm :
Scarce on his slipp'ry path, the traveller
Shall keep his weary foot—see, Bertha, see !
How the red lightning glimmers i'the west.

*Harold conceals his face in his
mantle.*

Ber O ! name it not, thou chill'st my heart with
fear—

I little love night's melancholy gloom ;
To me it tells of ghosts and shadowy things—
And now, my father's features in mine eye,
I see his prostrate, murder'd form again—
Bath'd i'the purple blood.

Al. My Lord !
I do intreat thou'lt watch no more to night.
Say, shall I wait alone ?

Har. This may not be, since I would see the
man,
And counsel with him first—

Ber. Alone ? my Lord.

Har. Alone, Bertha—

Marco, thou know'st, had once my kindest wishes.

Enter Page.

Boy. Marco, my Lord.

Har. Is he secur'd.

Boy. My lord, he is ; this key unlocks his fetters—

Har. Let him approach—

Exit Page.

Now Alfred,

At once, conduct your sister to her chamber ;
To night I'll hear the hapless Marco's tale,
And, if the guilty deed be truly his,
To morrow shall decide his fate.

Exit Alfred and Bertha.

How my heart sickens at the deadly act ;
Yet, thus to live, if such be living deem'd,
Betrays a cowardice my souls abhors.

Producing poison.

Yes, with this simple instrument of fate,
I might at once be free, and blot for ever,
The damning record of my foul dishonour.—
My heart is cold, it will not aid me now ;—
And yet, to morrow, should the wretch accuse,
Unnumber'd tongues will scoff at Harold's name,
And he descend into the murderer's tomb,
Condemn'd—abhorr'd. (*clank of chains*) ha ! he comes.
A moment hence, and I am lost for ever.

(*pours poison into the goblet.*)

Now, stubborn fate, act with me as thou wilt.

*He sinks into a chair—enter Marco in chains,
Harold motions the attendants to withdraw.*

Har. Marco !

Mar. Well !

Har. How is't I see thee thus ?

Mar. If 'tis thy trifling, take good heed thereof.

Har. Thou art accused of dark and fearful deeds.

Mar. Thou'lt be accus'd, an' I am not set free.

Harold, taking off his fetters. Full well thou
 know'st, tho' perchance, innocent
 Of the assassination of St. Claude,
 False men and tongues will rise to do thee ill :
 Or, being guilty, thou wilt plead my power.
 Thus then, alone, I staid to meet, to charge thee—
 Tho'—Marco———(*During this speech, Marco*
with ferocious and insolent familiarity ap-
proaches the table and drinks from the poi-
soned goblet.)

Mar. What ?

Har. Tho' thou did murder him.

Mar. And if I did, 'twas but to save myself.

He knew———

Har. What knew he ?

Mar. No matter—

Silence is on his lips and all is safe.

Now, to thy plan.

Har. We'll talk of that anon ;
 'Tis late—retire—early in the morning,
 Thou may'st expect to meet me i'the forest.

Mar. Enough—I know the spot.

Exit, taking a light.

Har. That spot shall be thy grave.
 Long be thy sleep—thy waking—'tis too much—
 Down, down my heart, be stubborn, firm, and sear ;
 Who blunts his knife in blood, must whet it not in
 fear. (Exit.)

SCENE II.

A mountain Cavern.—Enter Fabian and Almeda, she still bearing the packet.

Al. Alla be praised! we have escaped those wretches?

Think'st thou they'll pursue us?

Fab. No, Hafna, no.

I deem them nought but peasants of the mountains.

Al. Hush! e'en now I saw some moving shadow;
Let us retire to yonder lonely cavern
And note who comes.

They retire—enter Conrade and Martin meeting.

Con. What ho! speak or die.

Mart. Peace, Conrade, peace; are we alone thinks't thou.

Con. Why? Martin.

Mart. E'en now we were pursu'd. (*looks round*)
The vassals of the castle are abroad—
They saw our combat with the holy monks,
And, curses on them, marr'd us of our booty.
Why wert thou absent—

Con. I turn'd me back to close the cavern doors,
But, fatal hour! the pris'ners had escaped.

Mart. Escaped!

Con. The inner door is broken from its bolts.

Mart. Let us pursue them.

Con. Whither?

Mart. I know each nook, and turning of the mountain;
If they exist, we'll find them.

Con. On! on!

(*Exeunt.*)

Fabian and Almeda come forward.

Fab. Thou wert too right; ah! whither shall we turn?

Yon rugged mound should be familiar to me—
If these fell Brigands cross us where we wander,
My sword shall guard us.

Al. In Turkish land, I learnt to wield the dagger;
This packet holds the one Almeda gave—
Since, dearest Fabian, 'tis for life we struggle,
I shall not fear to strike.

Fab. Brave boy!

Exeunt.

SCENE III.

A State Apartment—Harold, Bertha, Alfred and Attendants.

Alf. Now, my good Lord, it were improper thus,
E'en in the very weakness of weak nature,
To sit in judgement on unhappy Marco.

Har. I pray have pity on my feelings, Alfred;
Unused, forsooth, to incidents like these,
They shock my frame—too feeling for its kind;

And yet, with all this sadness at my heart,
 More meet were I to fill a serious office ;
 Therefore, good Alfred, to the captive's chamber,
 And lead him forth to justice.

*Ex. Alfred and Attendants--Harold rises,
 and listens anxiously at the door.*

Har. Thinks't they've reach'd the chamber ?

Ber. My Lord !

Har. Did they cry out ?

Ber. For what ? my Lord.

Har. Hark ! hark !

Ber. What is't thou hears't ?

Har. My heart's on fire—

Why, Bertha, gazest thus ? O ! is there aught
 Of fear, or woe, written on my pallid brow ?
 Beware, Bertha, beware—pry not too deeply in my
 thoughts.

Ber. What mean thy words—thy looks of wildest
 phrenzy ?

Harold, frantically. What words ? what looks ?

Ber. Such as e'en now,
 In dread, I heard and saw.

Harold, after a moment's pause, turning away:
 Nothing ! nothing !

Enter an Attendant.

At. My Lord, the door, where Marco sleeps,
 is barr'd—
 We cannot rouse him.

Har. Then force the bolts—

Exit Page.

Aye, force the bolts, since he'll not answer thee,
Whose waking hour was in another world.
Now am I free, and so secure withal,
That I may laugh, and banquet in my joy :
No other tongue shall tell the damning deed—
No other form shall blast the sight of Harold.

(Listens.)

Ber. What dreadful accents hang upon his lips—
Why glare his eyes thus fiercely towards the door ?

Marco, without. Lead me to Harold—vengeance !
vengeance !

Enter Alfred, Harold recoils,

Alf. O horrid sight !

Ber. My brother !

Har. That voice !

Alf. 'Tis Marco's—

A strange, and dreadful malady torments him ;
At first he knew us not, and seem'd so wild,
That awe came o'er us as we met his glance.

*Enter Marco, pale and frantic, endeavouring
to disengage himself from the Attendants--
Harold stands torpidly apart.*

Mar. The burning teeth of hell gnaw at my heart,
And torture me to madness—Harold—stay.—
I know thee ; yes, I know thee, foul destroyer !
O ! that I had the pow'r to strangle thee—

O! that I might but drag thee down—down—down.

Pointing to the earth, he sinks gradually into the Attendants' arms, his eyes still fixed upon Harold.

Har. Why is this wretched murd'rer dragg'd before me?

Is he not mad?—away with him.

Mar. Stay, till these hands have wreak'd their vengeance on thee.

Suddenly disengaging himself from the Attendants, he rushes forward, with furious effort, and grasps Harold's arm, but unable to support himself, loosens his hold.

It will not be—Death's iron hand o'ertakes me—
His icy bolt comes—hissing—thro' my blood—
Curses—curse———(Dies.)

Alf. Curses on his lip—ire in his heart!
He's dead, my Lord! is it not wonderful?

Harold, convulsively. 'Tis nought to me—
It can be nought to me—'tis ever thus,
One deed of Death steps on the other's train.
I guess, that Marco, who last night, confess'd
The murder of St. Claude, in conscience smitten,
Thus, by some means, dark, as unnatural,
Hath hid his shame in dread eternity.

Alf. 'Tis even so. Confessing as thou say'st,
O! tell us of the fatal cause that urg'd him.

Har. Another time; first be this corse interr'd,
In some lone dingle of the forest.

Alf. My Lord, I'll see 'tis done. *Exit.*

As Marco is carried off, Bertha attempts to retire, Harold detains her.

Har. Bertha!

Bertha, tremblingly. My Lord!

Har. I know thy latent thoughts—

Such as they are, I little care to heed them—

Nor have I reason, yet, will have it so,

That thou pronounce me here, a solemn vow

Never to speak, nor shew to human being,

Record of that, which thou hast seen to day;

Mark me, the wildness of my words and actions,

While Alfred sought the couch where Marco slept.

Ber. Then, doubts my Lord, the prudence of his wife?

Harold, sternly. Thy wild conjectures I have noted oft—

This will not do.—I know the mood, the hour,

When converse, and the heart, must needs betray

The secret thought, uncurb'd by secret vow:

Therefore must thou swear.

Bertha fearfully. I swear, my lord.

Har. Thanks, thanks, dear Bertha! O did'st thou but know

The pangs, the fears that wound mine aching heart,

Needs must thou pity me—yes Bertha, yes,

Thy breast shall share my woes, lost as I am.

O Bertha! thy tender smiles of pity,

Are keen, keen daggers, here. (*Placing her hand*

on his breast.)

Exeunt,

SCENE IV.

Bertha's apartment—Enter Bertha.

Ber. A dreadful doubt, a chaos of suspense
Surrounds my drooping soul. Harold—my Lord—
Is he the thing he seems?—the guilty wretch?—
A host of dark ideas rush upon me.
Ah!—Marco's death, so singular! so sudden!
It racks my deepest sense—I guess in vain
For cause of that I dread.—My dying sire,
E'en in the wand'ring wildness of his reason,
Spoke tremblingly of Fabian, Harold, Marco!
Yea, I remember too, distracting thought—

Enter Page.

Page. A stranger, Lady, one of noble mein,
Requests admission to the Prince of Istria.

Ber. Thy master sleeps—nor were it well to rouse
him
So much he lacks repose—where is the guest.

Page I left him in the hall, with some sad youth—
One that's near fainting, from fatigue and travel.

Ber. Let him have rest and 'tendance, while the
other
Unfold his mission here.

Exit Page.

His converse, may divert my troubled mind
From objects vain, and doubts of inward horror.

Enter Fabian.

Fab. Lady, thy pardon, should the Prince of Istria

Abide the while beneath these ancient tower's,
His long lost brother, 'scaped from care and bondage,
Would fold him in his arms,

Ber. That form ! that voice !

Stranger, approach, that I may note those features,
For ah ! thine accents sound of joyous days,
Almost forgotten by the luckless Bertha.

Fab. Bertha said'st thou ? Lady.

Bertha, rushing into his arms. Fabian ! Fabian !

Fab. Allseeing heav'n ! for this, accept my thanks !
Bertha, the dearest object of my wishes,
Yet lives, to bless, to welcome my return.

Ber. Would that she did, but ah ! she lives to curse.
Tell me, dearest Fabian, tell me truly,
Why did'st thou leave me, lonely, brokenhearted,
And, all unmindful of our secret vows,
Come not, to call me thine.

Fab. The sway of fate, and ironhearted men,
Deni'd me that, for which I sigh'd so deeply ;
A captive, and in chains, e'en hope expir'd—
But, thou wilt cheer me now the storm is past ;
And, as I fondly press thee to my breast,
Make me more bless'd, than tho' we ne'er had parted.

(*Embrace.*)

Harold, without. Bertha !

Bertha, wildly. My husband !

Fab. Thy husband !

Ber. O ! scorn me not—I am enough a wretch,
Cut off from every hope—from every comfort.

Fab. Bertha, Bertha, that voice was Harold's.

Bertha, sinking at his feet. I am Harold's bride.

Fab. Harold is my brother. O cruel Bertha !
Is't thus I am repaid my love—my woes ?
Chief of these halls, I made a secret vow,
Never to wed, save one that lov'd me only ;
Beneath a peasant's garb I woo'd, and thought thee——

Bertha, weeping, and interrupting him. This is
too much, and Heaven must answer it.

Fab. Weave me a banner of the lightest texture,
And hang it on yon lofty pinnacle—
Twill' flirt, inconstant, with each passing zephyr ;
And such is woman !—selfish, faithless, women !
Heartless herself, she heeds not other's pangs,
But, lightly laughing, deems it pastime pleasant,
To triumph in our wrongs.

Ber. This to me !

Thou knewest not my sighs of wretchedness
For thee, too rigid Fabian. Many an hour,
When sable Midnight flung her horrors round,
Refusing comfort, have I stol'n forlornly,
To weep upon the spot where last we parted,
And bless, alone, thy name.

Fab. How then, Bertha,
Could'st thou become united to another ?
Thou wert my star——

Ber. Alas ! I thought thee dead—
Or worse, to me, one faithless to thy vows.
Age, silver age, sat on my father's brow,
And ruin laugh'd to scorn his many years :

Thy wretched Bertha held the fatal pow'r,
By wedding Harold, to redeem those honours,
For which, with bursting heart, she saw the tear
Of secret grief, steal from a parent's eye.—

Fab. O! we have drunk of anguish, to the dregs.

Harold, without. Bertha!

Ber. I come. (*Throwing herself on Fabian's neck.*)
Now, wilt thou plant thy dagger in my breast,
And bid me be at peace?—Harold approaches!
O! I would rather some tormenting demon
Seiz'd on my frame and dragg'd me to destruction,
Than meet that dreaded form. (*Rushes out.*)

Fab. Here dies, at once, the blossom of my hope.
O Hafna! but for thee, poor orphan boy,
'Twould give me joy to welcome desolation—
Till, in the savage phrenzy of my soul,
I laughing sat upon some perishing orb,
And hugg'd annihilation.

Exit.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A Gallery.—Enter Bertha and Harold.

Har. What stranger was it parted with thee,
Bertha—

That stays e'en now, with yonder blooming boy?
That boy methinks, seems like some tender female
So mild, so fair, his features.

Ber. What the youth is, I know not ; but the other,
Proclaims himself of nearest kin to thee.

Har. To me ! Bertha.

*Enter Fabian and Almeda,—Harold
recoils with horror.*

What dreadful vision stands before mine eyes ?
If it be Fabian, nay, that cannot be—
Yet Marco might deceive—O ! tell me stranger,
Art thou the brother that wert wont to love me—
The partner of my pastimes—of my childhood ?

Fab. I was that youth, but now, a man accurst ;
Bereft of the dear treasure that I lov'd—
Bent with adversity passing all hope.

Har. O ! hadst thou come but yesterday, my
brother,
Then had I bless'd the bounteous hand of heaven :
But now, thus coming, like reflecting glass,
To shew what *is*, to prove what *might have been*,
Thou sink'st me to despair.

Fab. Think not, Harold, I come to rob thee of thy
wealth or might,
An humble pittance will suffice my wants ;
One friend alone shall share my solitude—
Yon tender youth, since, I am all to him.

Alm. Now, dearest Fabian, let us hast away—
This gloomy pile flings sadness o'er my soul,
And, as I note its length'ning, sullen echos,
They seem to knell a death tone in mine ear.

Har. Nay, but thou wrong'st me, all I have is thine,
And gladly, gladly do I give it thee.
Mine be the hermit's cowl, thou Bertha,
I know, wilt share my secret loneliness.

Bertha, aside. O miserable fate!

Fab. Stay, stay, my brother! 'tis in vain thou goest,
In vain return'st the riches of our house;
Thou cans't not give me back the gem I've lost.
Thou cans't not make me other than I am.

Har. All that thou had'st is thine, I can no more,
Save my poor life——

Fab. I treasure innocence,
And would not turn assassin in my grief.

Harold, alarmed. Bertha! hast thou? ha!
Those streaming eyes—those wild convulsive throbs
Too plainly tell me, thou hast dar'd to speak
Thy cruel doubts.

*(Drawing his dagger and rushing
up to Bertha.)*

*Bertha, flinging her arms round his neck, and
presenting her bosom to the weapon.*

Strike here, my Lord, strike deeply.

*Harold, gazing piteously upon her, and,
after a pause, turning to Fabian.*

Fabian, thou must forgive these sudden starts;
A throng of ills has lately fallen on me—
Bertha alone can enter to my soul,

And buoy the wreck of its afflicted nature.
 Come to my arms, this seared, this bruised heart,
 Still bids thee welcome to thy native halls ;
 Retire with me, that I may learn the cause,
 How thus, as 'twere, escaping from the grave,
 Again thou, com'st so suddenly upon us.

Exit all but Bertha.

Ber. Reign o'er my tortur'd bosom fell Despair,
 For I am comfortless and woe-begone—
 Darkness is on me—all the world is lost—
 And, from the universal desolation,
 Spring cares, unknown till now, for me alone !
 Wilt thou not break, too wretched, stubborn heart—
 Come Death—come—O heaven ! hear—

She kneels—Scene closes.

Music.

SCENE II.

The Castle Gates—Enter Fabian and Almada.

Fab. To speak thus scornfully of Bertha's love !
 Unfeeling as thou art, but for one, Hafna,
 One, brighter than a Seraph's glory—one,
 Who bade me guide and comfort thy weak nature,
 I would not reason with so hard a heart ;
 Alike unknown, as all unsought by men,
 Fabian would seek some pathless solitude,
 Where he might tell his story to the winds,
 And weep his life out over Bertha's name.
 Hafna I'd form'd companion of my gloom—
 Hafna, alas !—

Al. Has not a heart to share it—
 Ungenerous Fabian!—ah! he loves me not—
 Cannot my error claim *one* poor excuse,
 Where faithless Bertha's find so many? alas!
 Time was, ungrateful man, wherein, my sister,
 Advent'rous, rash Almeda, stood before thee,
 And bade thee hope for freedom, that thou did'st,
 Yea, on this very poignard, swear to love me.

Fab. Thy sister, Hafna, was Almeda so?

Almeda, in tears. She'll not reproach thee—take
 this weapon Fabian,
 I cannot use it—thou, in mercy canst—
 Bereft of home, of country and of friends,
 What better can I sigh for than the tomb?

Fab. Gentle Hafna, best of youths, forgive me;
 Forgive my past indifference, and believe,
 My future love shall pay thee all I owe.

Alm. Fabian, this kindness makes me thine again.

Fab. A little space, and we shall quit these towr's;
 Yet, ere we go, I'll to the lonely shrine,
 Where aged Claude, my much lov'd friend reposes;
 "That shrine, in which the Princes of this land
 "Have slumber'd ages through;—there Hafna, there,
 "Of late, I learn, the Sculptor's ready hand,
 "E'en on my Father's tomb, hath wrought a name,
 "As dear, as honour'd by this grateful breast;
 "Yea, I'll away, and, gazing on that name,
 "Breathe a sad silent pray'r for him that wore it."

Exit.

Alm. To leave me thus,—unhappy that I am—

Anon I'll wear my long deserted garb,
 Hid in the packet Marco sav'd for me;
 And, if he bow not to my dauntless love,
 This dagger's point shall still my woes for ever.'

Exeunt.

SCENE THE LAST.

The Sepulchre of the Istrian Princes,—an ancient Monument in the centre, on which appears, in newly sculptured letters, the name of ST. CLAUDE.

Fabian discovered.

Fab. This hallow'd cell is like Sleep's hall of triumph—

So sadly mute each half-form'd object seems!
 The gloominess of death o'ertakes my soul,
 While thus, alone, I trample on the dead.
 Pious St. Claude! is this thy earthy couch?
 And this, the only record of a name,
 Throughout all Venice fam'd for goodliness?
 Methinks, as 'twere; but yesterday, thou bless'd me,
 Smil'd on my fears for Bertha's spotless heart,
 And joy'd to see us happy in each other—;
 Light was our reck'ning of the woes, the pangs,
 Which fell calamity hath since flung o'er us.

*He hangs thoughtfully over the tomb,—enter
 Bertha in a penitential habit.*

Ber. Fabian here?

Fab. O Bertha!

Ber Gaze on, and gaze thy last.

Fab. Ah! say not so, dear Bertha, say not so,
Till this, it seem'd, stern fate had done its worst;
But now, alas! I lose a glorious world,
A world of rapture in the sight of Bertha.

Ber. Brief be thy words, for I would hence at once,
Since forth I speed me to Triest's holy Church,
To take the peaceful veil—yet, ere I go,
One poor request is ling'ring at my heart,

Fab. What can the world afford and I refuse?

Ber. That which I ask is not of earthly nature,
But a sweet attribute of heaven's Divinity;——
Tis Pity, for thy wretched, hopeless brother.

Fab. Thou plead for him!

Ber. Fabian, how fair a virtue is compassion!
It hath been mine, true too, hath been my bane:
Yet, when this heart sleeps in its narrow urn,
All, all, will be repaid.——

Fab. O Bertha! Bertha! wherefore look'st thou thus?
So mildly sad thy faded features seem,
That, but I know thee, living as thou art,
My senses might esteem thee more than mortal.—
Tell me, I pray of thy request again.
I know not what I hear.

Ber. Note me, Fabian;
Tho' weighty secrets swell my lab'ring bosom,
A solemn vow imposes silence on me;
A deadly ill hangs over Harold's mind—
Should'st thou observe his wounded spirit writhing,
Then, Fabian, then, for my sake comfort Him,
E'en as he comforted thy Bertha's Father.

Fab. Alas!

Can I give solace lacking that I do?

Ber. The voice of sorrow, suff'ring should assuage,
Fabian, I go,—hear ye that distant step?
Unknown to Harold, comes my brother Alfred,
With holy Priests, to guide me to the cloister.

(Approaches the Tomb.)

Fab. One last embrace——

Ber. Farewell. *(Embrace.)*

*Enter Harold, Almada cautiously following,
dressed as at first.*

Har. This way she came, before her father's tomb
Her beads to tell, and shed a filial tear—
Can this be Bertha, this! down, down my fears—
Ah! who is he that holds her to his heart?

Ber. Remember thou the vow I said was on me.

Har. Am I betray'd? the secret his? distraction!
Die traitor! die.

*As he rushes forward to stab Fabian, Almada
arrests his arm.*

Alm. Hold! murd'rer hold!

Har. Who art thou, woman, that with secret step,
Thus steal'st in silent gloom, upon our deeds?

Alm. One of royal race!

Time was, I sat in splendid pomp attir'd,
With gems of richness blazing on my brow;
Yet I disdain'd the rank, the wealth of greatness,
And fled my home for love, yea, genuine love,
Since Fabian's heart was all Almada priz'd.

Fabian, sinking at her feet. Is it Almeda ! Hafna !
kind preserver ?

(Almeda raises him up.)

Har. No more of this, would ye had fall'n together
In the dark element's unfathom'd depth ;
Or, that the troubled and convulsed waters
Had toss'd your mangled corpses on the shore—
Then had I laugh'd to scorn this perjur'd woman,
Nor heeded aught her frantic tongue could blazon.

Fab. Harold, this wildness—

Har. Talk not of wildness to a wretch betray'd,
But tell him rather, of existing vengeance ;
And, when men ask how Harold punish'd Bertha,
Say that he slew her in his just disdain,
And as she fell, pour'd curses on her name.

Drawing his sword, he rushes towards Bertha, who, sinking at his feet, clings to him in terror.

Ber. Hear me, my Lord, you judge unjustly of
me—

He will not hear—O Fabian ! Fabian ! save me.

Fabian, drawing his sword. Monster, avaunt !
unhand that hapless fair ;

Or, at the tomb of her lamented sire,
I swear to strike thee dead.

Har. Thou Fabian ! thou—but for a coward's fears,
Thou know'st the rest, thanks to this *hapless fair* !
Yet will I scorn thee, call thee base imposter—
Nor that enough, I'll hold it forth a virtue
To let thee hence, with freedom and existence.

Fab. Know, Harold, know, while Fabian wears
a sword,
He will not crouch for favour, nor for justice ;
But, thus erect, demand his ancient right.

*They fight, Harold is almost overcome, as
Alfred, attended by Friars, bearing
torches, rushes in.*

Fab. E'en take thy life, since fate ordains it so.
Har. Fall'n as I am, I will not live disgrac'd,
Nor hold a life that Fabian has to offer.
But rather, thus, exulting in the deed,
I triumph, in destruction.

(Stabs Bertha and himself.)

Ber. O heaven !

Fab. Villain ! villain !

Bertha, supported by Alfred. 'Twill soon be past.
Nearer, nearer, Alfred.

Unhand me ! nay, I am not Harold's bride !
Here's blood, innocent blood ! Oh !—

Har. That voice ! that voice ! stay, dearest Bertha,
stay.

What Fiends are those, of foul and corse-like form—
Whose boney joints, piercing their winding cere-
ments,

Drag me to death, in links of flaming fire ?

O ! save me Bertha ! save me ! ha ! ha ! ha !

'That shade ! 'tis Marco's ! 'twill not let me pass :

A murd'rer's blood is on a murd'rer's head.

Help! they destroy me! Bertha, Bertha, stay,
While thus despairing'y, I rush between them.

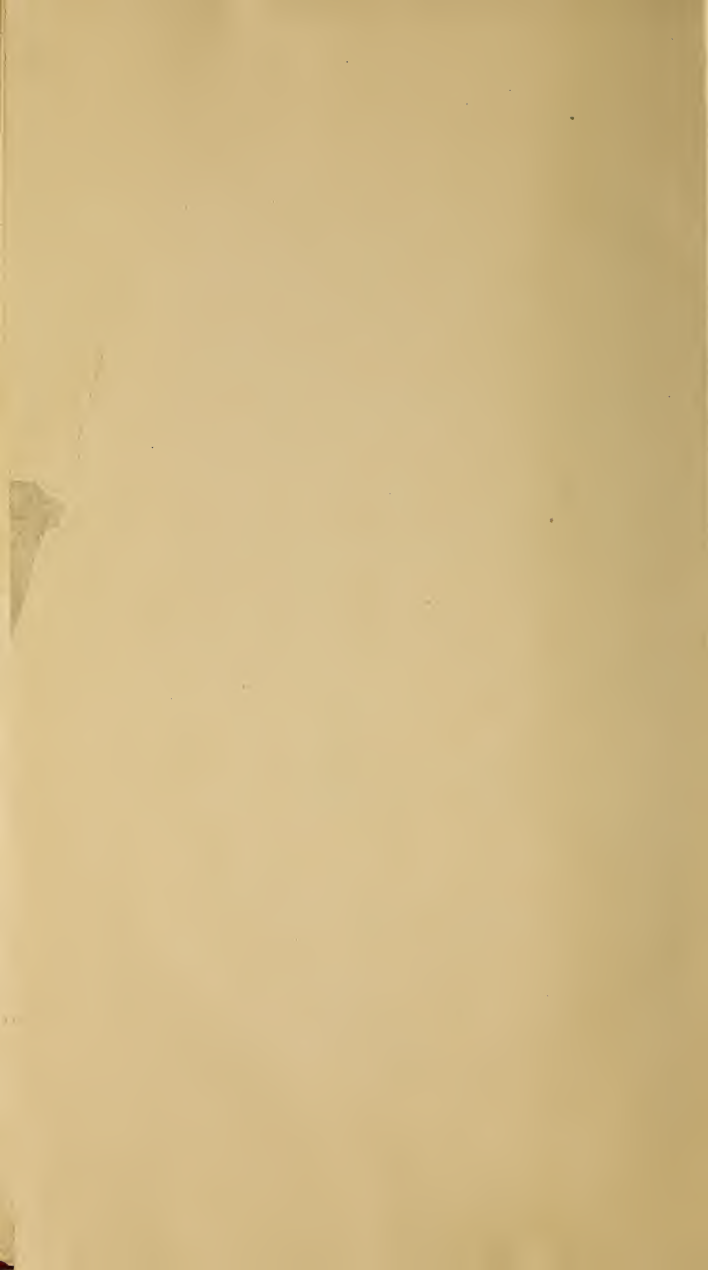
Suddenly disengaging himself from the Attendants, he rushes forward, falls, and expires at Bertha's feet.

Ber. "I'll not with him, a dun mist veils the way.
"Mark, Alfred, mark, on yonder purple cloud,
"Crown'd with a diadem of orient stars,
"My Father sits—he summons me to Heaven!
"Tis not the Shepherd's reed that Angels breathe!—
"Sweet, melting strains!—they waft me to repose.—
"Earth vanishes—my Father!—O my Father!—
"GREAT SPIRIT, hail! [*Dies.*]

Solemn Music.—Curtain descends.

THE END

The following is a list of the names of the
 persons who have been named in the
 various parts of the work, and who
 have been mentioned in the course of
 the narrative. The names are given in
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